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Archaeologists uncover slate at Nevern Castle "that kept evil spirits at bay"

Rare pieces of inscribed slate unearthed during a dig at one of the nation's oldest castles may provide valuable clues to life in medieval Wales, experts said. Archaeologists involved in a recent excavation on the site of Nevern Castle in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park believe the markings, dating back more than 800 years, indicate some ritualistic methods of warding off evil. The archaeological dig, headed by Dr. Chris Caple, of the University of Durham and Pete Crane from the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority found twelve slates - complete with stars and other designs incised - were found at the site's 12th century cut-stone entranceway. Caple said: "These inscribed slates are really interesting. They were found in only one place in the castle and were probably intended to ward off evil. Scratched images from the medieval world are rare, and we can confidently date these to the period 1170-1190 when the stone phase of Nevern Castle was built. These drawings connect us with the lives and beliefs of masons or laborers who built the castle. We hardly ever recover evidence about the peasants of the medieval world, and never information about their beliefs and ideas, but these scratched designs are from the imagination of a serf, a farm laborer or a man at arms."

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